

# Study Said to Show Bomb Lulls Were Meant to 'Placate' Public

The New York Times is restrained by Federal court order from publishing its own articles on the Pentagon study. The following dispatch is based on the second article in a similar series in The Washington Post. It was distributed by The Associated Press to all its newspaper, radio and television subscribers.

WASHINGTON, June 18 (AP) —The Washington Post reported tonight that secret Pentagon papers showed that the Johnson Administration's strategists had little expectation that the pauses in the bombing of North Vietnam in 1965 and 1968 would produce peace talks.

But the Johnson Administration policy-makers did believe the halts Washington ordered from time to time in its air attacks on North Vietnam "would help placate domestic and world opinion," according to the account appearing in today's issue of The Post.

The Post's article, by Murrey Marder, said:

"The Pentagon study discloses that some strategists in the Johnson Administration planned to use unproductive bombing pauses as a justification for escalating the war.

"This idea was first outlined privately by U.S. officials soon after the bombings of the North began in 1965.

"These planners regarded the lulls in bombing as a 'ratchet' to reduce tension and then intensify it, to produce 'one more turn of the screw' in order to 'crack the enemy's resistance to negotiations,' the report states."

## Terms 'Irreconcilable'

"Throughout these years American officials regarded their terms for peace as virtually irreconcilable with the conditions offered by North Vietnam and the Vietcong. They recognized that the terms for peace talks would have to be eased before negotiations could even begin."

United States-North Vietnamese talks finally got under way in Paris after President Lyndon B. Johnson halted the bombing of the northern parts of North Vietnam on March 31, 1968. Broader Paris discussions including the Vietcong and

South Vietnam began after Mr. Johnson completely stopped the air attacks on the North on Oct. 31, 1968.

The Post article said that in the 1965-68 period, before the Paris sessions began, the Pentagon study reported: "The most uncompromising U.S. planners insisted that the enemy would interpret the pauses in the bombing as a sign of American softness."

"Consequently, the failure of the Communist side to make a conciliatory response to each bombing lull was used as an argument for escalating U.S. involvement, either in the air over North Vietnam, or on the ground in South Vietnam, and usually both," the Post article said.

"President Johnson was often caught in the crossfire between the hawks and doves over this issue, as he often protested in private," it said.

## Proposal Laid to Rusk

One of the matters that has been subject of public debate had some new light shed on it, according to the Post's account. This was whether it was Secretary of State Dean Rusk, regarded by some as a hawk on Vietnam, or Secretary of Defense Clark M. Clifford, subsequently a war critic, who proposed the partial bombing halt in 1968.

The Pentagon study confirms it was Mr. Rusk in early March, 1968—as Mr. Johnson has said—rather than Mr. Clifford, who suggested the partial halt, the story said.

But the Pentagon documents also indicated that Mr. Rusk's "fundamental commitment to achieving the original goals of the war was unchanged" while Mr. Clifford became convinced that the war was hopeless, the Post said.

One of the documents quoted from the Pentagon study was a State Department cable prior to the partial halt in March, 1968.

"You should make clear that Hanoi is most likely to denounce (the partial bomb halt and the accompanying offer to Hanoi to 'not take advantage' of it) project and thus free our hand after a short period," the diplomatic cable is quoted as having said.

It also said: "In view of

weather limitations, bombing north of the 20th Parallel will in any event be limited at least for the next four weeks or so—which we tentatively envisage as a maximum testing period in any event. Hence, we are not giving up anything really serious in this time frame."

## Could Be 'Used in Laos'

"Moreover," the message continued, "air power now being used north of 20th can probably be used in Laos, where no policy change planned and in SVN (South Vietnam)."

"Insofar as our announcement foreshadows any possibility of a complete bombing stoppage, in the event Hanoi really exercises reciprocal restraints, we regard this as unlikely. . . ."

The Post article notes that this message to U. S. ambassadors abroad clearly did not anticipate Johnson's surprise announcement, at the end of his March 31, 1968, bomb-halt speech, that he would not run again for President.

The Pentagon study is quoted as having said Mr. Rusk wrote a memorandum in July, 1965, saying:

"The central objective of the United States in South Vietnam must be to insure that North Vietnam not succeed in taking over or determining the future of South Vietnam by force.

"We must accomplish this objective without a general war if possible. . . . The integrity of the U. S. commitment is the principal pillar of peace throughout the world. If that commitment becomes unreliable, the Communist world would certainly draw conclusions that would lead to our ruin and almost certainly to a catastrophic war."

The Post said the Pentagon study credited former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and the late Assistant Secretary of Defense for Internal Security Affairs, John McNaughton, in July, 1965, with proposing a major 37-day bomb halt at the end of the year.

The first pause in the United States air strikes on North Vietnam had taken place in May of that year.